

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 NEA-11 ISO-00 HA-05 IO-13 CIAE-00
DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 /089 W
-----036884 011424Z /40

O R 312040Z MAY 78
FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8592
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAO PAULO 1577

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, SREF, BR
SUBJ: WAR CRIMINAL GUSTAV FRANZ WAGNER

REF: BRASILIA 4286

1. SUMMARY: THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF CONFUSION IN PRESS REPORTING AND IN FACT WHETHER THE GUSTAV FRANZ WAGNER WHO HAS BEEN ARRESTED BY SAO PAULO POLICE IS THE FORMER VICE-COMMANDANT OF TREBLINKA. HOWEVER, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GUSTAV FRANZ WAGNER HELD BY THE POLICE IS A WAR CRIMINAL WANTED FOR HOMICIDE BY THE FRG. POLICE AND THE ISRAELI AND GERMAN CONSULATES HAVE DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF STORY. CLARIFICATION IS EXPECTED BY EARLY NEXT WEEK AFTER ISRAELI DOCUMENTATION ARRIVES. END SUMMARY.

2. CHIEF OF SAO PAULO POLITICAL AND SOCIAL POLICE DIVISION (DEOPS) ROMEU TUMA TOLD CONGENOFF ON MAY 30 THAT GUSTAV FRANZ WAGNER HAD PRESENTED HIMSELF TO DEOPS UPON HEARING THAT HE WAS BEING SOUGHT BY AUTHORITIES. TUMA SAID THAT WAGNER TOLD POLICE
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THAT HE WAS NOT THE FORMER VICE-COMMANDANT AT TREBLINKA AND GAVE HISTORY OF HIS STATUS IN BRAZIL (PARAS 3 AND 4 REFTEL). TUMA SAID HE WILL AWAIT EVIDENCE EXPECTED FROM ISRAELI CONSULATE. ON MAY 31, DEOPS VICE CHIEF TOLD CONGENOFF THAT POLICE CONTINUE TO HARBOR DOUBTS ABOUT WAGNER'S IDENTITY AND WILL KEEP HIM IN CUSTODY UNTIL CASE IS CLARIFIED.

3. FRG CONGENOFF TOLD POLOFF THAT HE HAD TALKED ON MAY 31 WITH GUSTAV FRANZ WAGNER WHO IS UNDER ARREST. THE STORY THAT WAGNER TOLD PRESS -- I.E., THAT HE WAS A SARGENT-MAJOR, IN CHARGE OF SARGENTS AND OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE COMPANY AT SOBIBOR -- COINCIDES WITH INFORMATION IN FRG ON PERSON OF SAME NAME WANTED FOR HOMICIDE FOR HIS ACTIVITIES AT SOBIBOR. FRG CONGENOFF SAID THAT WAGNER'S PERSONAL PAPERS ALSO COINCIDED WITH FRG INFORMATION. HE STATED THAT WAGNER DENIED THAT HE HAD BEEN AT ITATIAIA CELEBRATION OF HITLER'S 90TH BIRTHDAY AND NOTED THAT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PICTURES OF THE WAGNER TAKEN AT ITATIAIA AND THE WAGNER HELD BY THE POLICE. FRG CONGENOFF SAID THAT POLICE TOLD HIM THAT ANOTHER GERMAN NATIONAL WITH LAST NAME OF WAGNER, WHO HAD ALSO BELONGED TO THE SS, HAD DIED IN SAO PAULO THREE YEARS AGO. HE SAID THAT POLICE TOLD HIM THEY WERE INVESTIGATING THAT PERSON AS WELL AS THE POSSIBLE EXISTENCE OF ANOTHER PERSON WHO MIGHT BE THE GUSTAV FRANZ WAGNER WHO WAS AT TREBLINKA.

4. ISRAELI CONSUL GENERAL TOLD CONGENOFF THAT ISRAELI'S BELIEVE THAT THE MAN UNDER ARREST IS THE GUSTAV FRANZ WAGNER WHO WAS VICE-COMMANDANT AT TREBLINKA. HE SAID THAT HE "COULD GUARANTEE" THAT WAGNER DID NOT TURN HIMSELF IN TO THE POLICE VOLUNTARILY. HE DISCOUNTED THE POSSIBILITY OF TWO GUSTAV FRANZ WAGNERS, STATING THAT THE NUMBER OF SIMILARITIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE MAN WHO IS UNDER ARREST AND THE VICE-COMMANDANT AT TREBLINKA MAKE THIS VERSION IMPROBABLE. HE SAID THAT THE WAGNER WHO IS UNDER ARREST
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WILL BE CONFRONTED THIS WEEK BY PEOPLE WHO WERE IMPRISONED AT SOBIBOR AND TREBLINKA TO IDENTIFY HIM. ISRAELI CONGEN STATED THAT OTHER DOCUMENTATION--THE NATURE OF WHICH HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW--IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN SAO PAULO BY JUNE 5.

5. COMMENT: IN WHAT OBVIOUSLY IS AN UNCLEAR, BUT HIGHLY EMOTIONAL AND CONTROVERSIAL CASE, THE SAO PAULO POLICE APPEAR TO BE ACTING CAUTIOUSLY AND CORRECTLY. BOTH ISRAELI AND FRG CONSULATE OFFICERS PRAISED POLICE ACTIONS.
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